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ABSTRACT

Dada was a collective movement among avant-garde artists who rejected the existing culture of post-World War I Europe on the grounds that it belonged to the same society that had produced the war. This paper discusses Dada typography in relation to typography's role and function in the history of printing, the changes resulting from the industrialization of the printing industry, and the accelerated volume of commercial activity in the nineteenth century. Dada typographic experimentation is contrasted with traditional typography conventions and is compared with the typographic works of the adjacent movements of Futurism and Constructivism. The paper describes and analyzes Dada typography and its application in various publications and art media in the context of the traditional conventions it sought to break and how it broke them. Dada's typographic innovations are discussed in terms of their initial rejection and eventual incorporation by other movements to create the new typography. Twenty-six notes and 11 figures are included, and 15 references are appended. (Author/MS)

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DADA TYPOGRAPHY:
PATTERNS OF EXPERIMENTATION WITH GRAPHIC DESIGN 1912-1930

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A paper presented to the Visual Communication Division,
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DADA TYPOGRAPHY: PATTERNS OF EXPERIMENTATION WITH GRAPHIC DESIGN 1912-1930

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Abstract

Dada typography is discussed in relation to typography's role and function in the history of printing, the changes resulting from the industrialization of the printing industry, and the accelerated volume of commercial activity in the nineteenth century. Dada typographic experimentation is contrasted with traditional typography conventions and is compared with the typographic works of the adjacent movements of Futurism and Constructivism. This paper describes and analyzes Dada typography, its application in various publications and art media, in the context of the traditional conventions it sought to break and how it broke them. Dada's typographic innovations are discussed in terms of their initial rejection and eventual incorporation by other movements to create the new typography.

Introduction

Modern art has given the typographer and graphic artist a visual language of expression; but not without challenging the role and function of typography and the traditional conventions of graphic design. As an art movement, Dada was a major contributor to the modern revolution in graphic arts and design. Dada exploited the expressive potential of typography and graphic design. In contradiction to the classical tradition which ideally viewed typography as a servant to the written word, Dada typography called attention to itself. Dada's rejection of traditional conventions made it easy to dismiss Dada as anarchy or as pure negation. But this marginalization of Dada's contributions ignores the influence that Dada had on later developments in twentieth century graphic design.

In general terms, Dada was a collective movement among avant-garde artists who rejected the existing culture of post-World War I Europe on the grounds that it belonged to the same society that had produced the war. Dadaists included artists, writers, poets and sculptors who rejected attempts to convey realism in art and literature. Dadaists rejected traditional forms of art which they said were produced for the bourgeois consumer, and rather, sought to construct something new which would reflect the chaos of society.

In her book, Dada and Surrealism (1978), Dawn Ades says of Dada,

> It was essentially a state of mind, focused by the war from discontent into disgust. This disgust was directed at the society responsible for the terrifying waste of that war, and at the art and philosophy which appeared so enmeshed with bourgeois rationalism that they were incapable of giving birth to new forms through which any kind of protest could be made. In place of this paralysis to which the situation seemed to lead, Dada turned to the absurd, to the primitive, or to the elemental.[1]

As a result of this approach, most Dada works seem to be a senseless combination of unrelated elements. This can account for disagreement among art critics and historians as to the nature of Dada, as Dada consisted of experiments which borrowed from other movements and combined elements at chance, so as to strip them of their traditional meaning in the context of society.

Dada writers employed the literary form of the polemic manifesto to proclaim their rejection of all tradition and convention. The vehicle for their printed manifestos, poems and two-dimensional art works was a series of short-lived periodicals, issued usually in cooperation with a gallery, club or other organization which supported the avant-garde movement in the arts. These Dada periodicals were as erratic as the Dadaists themselves. They were troubled by censorship, lack of financial support and the inflationary times of post-World War I Europe. The pages of the

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[1] Dawn Ades, Dada and Surrealism. Woodbury, NY: Barron's, 1978, p. 12.

periodicals were an eclectic convergence of manifestos, nonsense and sound poems, reviews of art work, illustrations and photographs. The periodicals display an interesting struggle between the traditional conventions of the print medium and the revolutionary ideas of the Dadaists. It is this struggle that is the focus of this study.

Dada typography is discussed in relation to typography's role and function in the history of printing, particularly in view of the changes resulting from the industrialization of the printing industry and the accelerated volume of commercial activity in the nineteenth century. More specifically, Dada typographic experimentation is contrasted with traditional typographic conventions and is compared with the typographic works of the adjacent movements of Futurism and Constructivism. Furthermore, this paper describes and analyzes Dada typography, its application in various publications and art media, in the context of traditional conventions it sought to break and how it broke them. Finally, the problematic nature of the acceptance of Dada's typographic inovations are discussed, including their initial rejection and eventual incorporation by other movements to create the new typography.

History

> The new vocabulary of typography and graphic design was forged during a period of less than twenty years. The 'heroic' period of modern typography may be said to have begun with

> Marinetti's Figaro Manifesto in 1909 and to have reached its peak during the early 'twenties. By the end of that decade it had entered a new and different phase, one of consolidation rather than exploration and innovation.[2]

Art and printing historian Herbert Spencer locates the revolution of typography and graphic design which led to the evolution of modern typography in the first quarter of the twentieth century-- specifically within the movements of Futurism, Dada and Constructivism. The typographic revolution is located within these movements because Futurism and Dada attempted to deconstruct the established cultural sign system and the accompanying rationale which they associated with the violence of World War I. Constructivism, in turn, attempted to reconstruct a new sign system stressing the elemental. Although the attempts of these movements are largely motivated by political and ideological concerns which can be related directly to the times, certain preconditions existed within the printing industry which made the typographic revolution possible. Indeed, the discussion of the revolution in typography which exploded the traditional conventions of printing and graphic design must be preceded by a discussion of those conventions and their origins.

The original objective of the system of movable type, which is the essence of printing, was to imitate as closely as possible the letterforms and page arrangement of the

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[2] Herbert Spencer, Pioneers of Modern Typography. New York: Hastings House, 1969, p. 13.

manuscript books. In this, Gutenberg and others were successful, as early printed books were barely distinguishable from the manuscripts which preceded them. Early printing attempts were so successful that the various processes, manual operations and presses themselves changed little over the course of more than 350 years. Conventional book design which was realted to the equipment and materials was also little changed for the same period. Conventions dictated the materials used, the visual forms used to convey particular ideas, the way in which materials and forms were combined and the appropriate size and scale of work.

Book design was based on the classical Renaissance format. Ideally, typography was to be an invisible, or at least transparent, bridge between the writer's words and the reader. To be sure, these traditional conventions of book design continued into the twentieth century as Stanley Morison, typographical director of British Monotype Corporation, reiterated in his treatise on printing and typography, First Principles of Typography (1936).

> According to our doctrine, a well-built book is made up from vertical and oblong pages arranged in paragraphs having an average line of ten to twelve consistantly spaced words, set in a fount of comfortable size and familiar design; the lines sufficiently separated to prevent doubling and composition being headed by a running title. This rectangle is so imposed upon the page as to provide centre, head, foredge and tail margins of dimensions suitably related not only to the length of line but to the disposition of space at those points where the text is cut into chapters, and where the body joins the prefectory and other

pages known as preliminaries.[3]

Additionally, illustration matched the restrained elegance of the roman letterforms, giving the printed page an eveness of color and texture, creating essentially a homogeneous gray page. The ideal of visual harmony among elements was paramount in classical book design. But the growth of advertising in commercially supported newspapers and magazines demanded more flexibility in the conventions of printing.

In his book, Printing Types, Alexander Lawson says the traditional conventions of graphic design which were based on the book reversed themselvesh the advent of the Industrial Revolution.

> Early in the nineteenth century English typefounders produced a variety of embellished types designed to emphasize their unique characteristics for the single purpose of attracting attention. Fat faces, grotesques, and Egyptians--decorative types when compared to the romans which had undergone but minor changes since the Italian fifteenth-century period--were not flamboyant enough for the new requirements of the advertising display.[4]

New letterforms were designed to fulfill the need of advertisers to distinguish their messages from editorial content. New and more diverse illustration forms were also made possible by the adaptation of lithography in 1950 and the later invention of the photoengraving process.

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[3] Stanley Morison, First Principles of Typography, New York: MacMillan Co., 1936, p. 16.

[4] Alexander Lawson, Printing Types: An Introduction. Boston: Beacon Press, 1971, p. 115.

Classical book formats could not encompass the contrast in overall design of the printed page. The changes brought on by rapid industrialization and the boon in commercial activity led to a general degradation of aesthetics and widespread eclecticism in design in the printing industry. The Renaissance concept of the ideal book was no longer the dominant format in publication design. By the turn of the century, the printing industry had largely lost sight of the traditional ideals of the printed book and was open to influence from outside.

> The violence with which modern typography burst upon the early twentieth-century scene reflected the violence with which new concepts in art and design in every field were sweeping away exhausted conventions and challenging those attitudes which had no relevance to a highly industrialized society.[5]

Modern typography has its roots in the art and literature movement of the early twentieth century. Artists and writers attacked the rationalism of the time and sought new forms of expression that had their origins in the present rather than the past. In addition to their artworks, exhibitions and staged events, artists seized upon printing because, Herbert Spencer says, "they clearly recognized it for what it properly is--a potent means of conveying ideas and information--and not for what it had then become--a kind of decorative art remote from the realities of contemporary society."[6]

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[5] Spencer, 1969, p. 13.

Futurism

For the most part, the avant-garde art movement did not engage in experimentation with typography to create models or new ideal forms. Rather, they experimented with typography in attempts to free it from the straight-jacket of traditional conventions and to give it an expressive voice which could add emphasis to their messages. The Futurists, who stressed speed, dynamism and simultaneity in their works, demanded that typographic forms should intensify the content of their printed words. In 1909, Marinetti wrote,

> The book will be the futurist expression of our futurist consciousness. I am against what is known as the harmony of a setting. When necessary, we shall use three or four columns to a page and twenty different type faces. We shall represent hasty perceptions in italic and express a scream in bold types...a new, painterly, typographic representation will be born out of the printed page.[7]

Furthermore, in a technical manifesto on literature published in 1912, Marinetti says, "The free expressive orthography and typography are used to express the facial expressions of the reader." And he calls for the "use of onomatopeia--direct onomatopeia, imitative and elemental."[8] Marinetti's attention to the expressive character of

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Spencer, 1969, p. 16.

[8] In Moholy-Nagy, "Literature" in The Avant-Garde Tradition in Literature, Richard Kostelanetz (ed.), Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1982, p. 91.

language could be manifest visually with equally expressive use of typography. Futurism drew on the new expressiveness of nineteenth century commercial typography to represent the sharp contrasts in the new, modern age. Typography took on a connotative function in addition to its denotative role.

In his essay on "Literature," Moholy-Nagy says there is nothing obscure in the futurist literature, and he warns that the reader should not be misled by its unusual form and typography. "It is bare of all mystery and metaphysics. The futuristic poem is an exact description of facts, actions and events in stenographic compression."[9] Furthermore, Moholy-Nagy adds,

> Futurist poetry, according to its followers, is an uninterrupted spontaneous current of analogies, the substance of each intuitively abbreviated in its essential form. Marinetti added a great number of new elements to contemporary poetry: sound effects; verbalization of sound and sight correspondences; sound collage, etc. An acoustic collage (onomatopeia) adapting the visual technique of the cubist collages and the simultaneity of Appolinaire is shown in his "Apres la Marne, Joffre Viste La Front en Auto."[10] (Figure 1)

Dada

If Futurist experiments with typography served more to break tradition than as models for new communication, then Dada can be said to have furthered the tradition-breaking cause. Dada borrowed much from Futurism in its use of

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[9] Moholy-Nagy, Ibid, p. 93.

[10] Ibid.

violent language, concepts of dynamism and simultaneity and the polemic manifesto. These Futurist elements are apparent in Dada works. As Hans Richter notes in his book on Dada, "The free use of typography in which the compositer moves over the page verticaly, horizontally and diagonally, jumbles his type faces and makes liberal use of his stock of pictorial blocks--all this can be found in Futurism years before Dada."[11] The fundamental difference between the movements, Richter points out, is "Futurism had a programme and produced works designed to fulfill this programme. Dada not only had no programme, it was against all programmes."[12]

Dada was able to smash the conventions of typographic communication by suspending its belief in the rational. It thrived on shock, provocation, the accidental and the immediate. As a result, Arthur Cohen says, "Type came alive, living things squirming off the page, requiring that the words be reread and reconceived, that the writing itself be composed as typography and reaprehended as a living voice, speaking volumes, shouting and making love."[13]

Dada claimed nature as a model for the random and accidental combinations found in its work. Tristan Tzara,

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[11] Hans Richter, Dada: Art and an Anti-Art, New York: Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 33.

[12] Ibid, p. 34.

[13] Arthur Cohen, "The Typographic Revolution," in Dada Spectrum: The Dialectics of Revolt. Madison/Iowa City: Coda Press, 1979, p. 88.

the author of "Seven Dada Manifestos,"[14] advocated the explosion of the cultural sign system by breaking the codes through contradiction and nonsensical combinations. In his article, "The Semiotics of Dada Poetry," Rudolf Keunzli writes:

> In deconstructing the cultural sign systems through their own sign productions, the Dadaists attempted to convince their audience of the arbitrary nature of signs, and thereby to liberate them from the prison of their murderous social order. Through the deconstruction of the semantic function of the sign system the Dadaists hoped to disrupt and change the way in which society saw the world. Hence the Dadaists are not primarily concerned with bringing about change in art or literature, but with deconstructing the whole social system.[15]

Tzara suggests the role of typography in the process of deconstructing the sign system in his Manifesto of 1918:

> There is a literature that does not reach the voracious mass. It is the work of creators, issued from a real necessity in the author, produced for himself. It expresses the knowledge of a supreme egoism, in which laws wither away. Every page must explode, either by profound heavy seriousness, the whirlwind, poetic frenzy, the new, the eternal, the crushing joke, enthusiasm for principles, or by the way in which it is printed. On the one hand a tottering world in flight, betrothed to the glockenspiel of hell, on the other hand, new men. Rough, bouncing, riding on hiccups. Behind them a crippled world and literary quacks with a mania for improvement.[16]

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[14] Translated and printed in Robert Motherwell, The Dada Painters and Poets. Boston: G.K. Hall Co., 1981, pp. 75-97.

[15] Rudolf Kuenzli, "The Semiotics of Dada Poetry," in Dada Spectrum, 1979, 2, 56.

[16] Tzara, in Motherwell, 1981, p. 79.

With this prescription by Tzara, and the examples of the Futurists, the Dadaists set out to attack the pomposity of Western art, letters and civilization. They used symbols in the most eccentric manner, allowing elements to interact spontaneously. They rejected the classical ideal of harmony among all elements. They rejected axial symmetry and traditional margination. Some works also show a rejection of decorative letterforms and ornamentation, favoring instead the use of heavy rules and borders, sans serif letterforms and heavy wood block prints.

Willy Verkauf describes the publications of the Zurich Dadaists:

> The young artists had discovered in Jul. Heuberger a printer who showed understanding for radical typographical experiments. The dadaists, unfettered by any tradition, tried to break up the rigid set, the regular run of typography by using types and blocks of the most widely different grades. The layout of the sets was enriched by a lively rhythm of black and white, and a new effect, rather like a picture was achieved. The joy of experimenting and creative imagination took the place of orthodox typographical tradition. Coloured paper was introduced to liven up the publications. Bizarre woodcuts by Arp, mysterious "mechanical designs" by Picabia, reproductions of works by A. Giacometti, Kandinsky and Klee, woodcuts by Hans Richter, lithographs by Viking Eggeling and many other things more, adorned the periodicals and other publications. Marcel Janco and Hans Arp illustrated the poetical works of their friends with fine woodcuts, distinguished for their wealth of forms.[17]

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[17] Willy Verkauf, Dada: Monograph of a Movement, Teufen (AR) Switzerland: Arthur Niggli Ltd., 1961, pp. 147-148.

Pages from Cabaret Voltaire (see Figure 2), show what from a modern perspective seems to be a creative approach to solving the unique typographical problem of printing the text for a simultaneous poem. Additionally, the spacing of text around the two woodcuts does not seem radical from a contemporary perspective, yet the use of white space in this example was extraordinary for its time. Cabaret Voltaire, for the most part, printed copy in a single column, centered on the page, and used mixed upper and lower case letters in the traditional combinations. Exceptions include several poems printed in all lower case.

The covers of Dada (see Figure 3) show an evolution of experimentation with typography and graphic design. Editions 1 and 2 show a generous use of white space, locating artwork along the extreme left margin of the cover. Experimentation can be noted in the letter spacing of the title. Bolder block sans serif types and experimentation with diagonal and vertical arrangement of type is noted in Dada 3, 6, and 7. Interior pages from Dada 3 (see Figure 4) show generous use of white space, varying sizes and arrangements of type and contrasting weights of woodcuts.

To summarize, Zurich Dada periodicals reflect the collective nature of the art movement which existed during the late war period. For the most part, the Dada periodicals published in Zurich (Dada 1-5) are catalogs of various artworks on exhibit and announcements of upcoming

shows. Editions number between 16 and 32 pages. The periodical changed upon moving to Paris in 1920 (Dada 6 and 7). More radical experimentation with design--especially simultaneous placement of type on horizontal, vertical and diagonal axis--was attempted. Also, Dada 6 and 7 each had only four pages consisting mainly of poetry and announcements.

Unlike Zurich Dada's nihilistic approach to bourgeois art and ideology, German Dada had a different orientation. In founding Club Dada in Berlin, Richard Huelsenbeck saw the movement as more sociopolitical than artistic in nature. John Elderfield writes:

> With Berlin Dada, 'art' thus left the realm of idealism and metaphysics, became materialistic and pragmatic, essentially conscious of present events through not only its awareness of artistic problems but by continuously interacting with the world as a whole, involving itself in practically everything. And because of the disillusionment and the violence of the Berlin environment a new primitivism of instinct, strength and brute force appeared, to initiate the concept of permissive counter-violence as an effective way of registering protest.[18]

As a result, German Dada is much more focused in its criticism of the Expressionist movement and of the Weimar Republic. Periodicals like Neue Jugend (see Figure 5), resemble a newspaper in its use of four-column layout grid. Multiple type faces were used resulting in sharp contrast reflective of the heterogeneous nature of the content. Die

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[18] John Elderfield, "Dissenting Ideologies and the German Revolution," in Studio 180, November, 1970, p. 182.

freie Strasse (see Figure 6), shows a bold design concept, utilizing a wide variety of types including a traditional gothic text, which rarely appears in Dada publications, because of all type faces, gothic was most strongly suggestive of Germany's past culture.

The Dadaist manifesto from Dada Almanach (see Figure 7) shows the conventional presentation of text in single column, paragraphed form. The radical element can be noted in the intervening explosions of words which represent shouts of defiance. Der blutige Ernst (see Figure 8) used a combination of typography and hand-drawn lettering placed horizontally and diagonally on the page accompanied by caricatures of German bourgeoisie and German militarism by George Grosz. Grosz's line drawings are mixed with simultaneous messages and contrasted with extremely bold type and rules.

Constructivism

The negativism of the Dada movement coupled with its denial of purpose made it a short-lived movement. As a successor to Dada, Constructivism drew upon the talents of former Dadaists and produced a new order out of the typographic chaos of Dada works. Constructivism stressed the functional role of typography and graphic design. Like Dada, Constructivism rejected traditional conventions, however unlike the Dadaists, the Constructivists sought a logic to guide the development of conventions governing the aesthetics of design.

As was typical of many of the artists associated with Constructivism, Kurt Schwitters was active in the German Dada scene for several years before his work can truly be aligned with Constructivism. But a discussion of Schwitters illuminates the transition several artists made from the nihilistic Dada movement to the more disciplined activities of the Constructivists.

> Kurt Schwitters, whose early work had much in common with Dada, was by his intuitive art able to transform the anarchy of disordered collages and typography into something positive. His collages and typographical arrangements were much more than statements of anarchy. They were real works of art.[19]

Schwitters was not the only Dadaist to exhibit constructive tendencies in his work. The cover of Der Dada (see Figure 9) shows the disciplined definition of graphic space and inner relation of elements common to Constructivism. Certainly by the time Schwitters published the first edition of his Merz publication in 1923 (see Figure 10), he was identified equally with the Constructivist movement. Schwitters moved firmly into the Constructivist camp following his joint effort with El Lissitzky on Merz 8-9 (see Figure 11). But as early as 1920, Schwitters went on record stating his formalist concern.

> Merz stands for freedom from all fetters, for the sake of artistic creation. Freedom is not a lack of restraint, but the product of strict artistic discipline.[20]

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[19] John Lewis, Typography: Design and Practice. New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1978, p. 43.

Schwitters' formalist concerns are noted in the limited outer reference of materials in his collages in favor of the development of an internal syntactical structure. In a discussion of Schwitters' poetry, Rudolf Kuenzli notes:

> Schwitters' constructivist tendancies might suggest that his work reflects the "second speed" of Dada, the production of new signs. But although Schwitters deconstructs the semantic system of language by producing new combinations between vowels and consonants and thereby liberates the materiality of language, he structures this material in a rather traditional way, e.g. in the form of the classical sonata.[21]

Indeed, Schwitters' work does conveniently represent a turning point from the deconstructive activities of Dada to the beginnings of creating new forms, stressing primary and elemental forms which characterize the work of the Constructivists. Constructivism's major contribution to typography was an appreciation of controlled space. While the Constructivists rejected traditional symmetry, they stressed an overall balance of forms and space. In no way is the placement of elements or their relationship to one another accidental or ambiguous (refer again to figures 10 and 11). For the Constructivists, geometrically-designed letterforms, particularly the sans serifs, were an uncontaminated medium. In the end, the letterform proved to be one of the elemental parts of universal communication--the letter was a primary element in the reconstruction of

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[20] Quoted in John Elderfield, "Merz in the Machine Age," in Arts and Artists, July 1970, p. 57.

[21] Kuenzli, in Dada Spectrum, 1979, p. 65.

the new communication. As Lissitsky says, "Concepts are connected by conventional words and shaped in letters of the alphabet...the new book demands new writers!"[22]

Conclusion

Dada's influence and contributions to modern typography have largely been neglected or ridiculed. Book historian Douglas McMurtrie's comments regarding the strenuous efforts made to burst the bonds of typographic tradition in post-war Germany serve as an example. "These efforts produced a 'lunatic fringe' of typographic experiments whose 'creations' were, to say the least of them, startling."[23] Despite the deconstructive nonsense and nihilism of the Dadaists, their work should not be viewed as entirely negative. As Hans Richter says, "A work of art, even when intended as anti-art, asserts itself irresistibly as a work of art. In fact, Tzara's phrase 'the destruction of art by artistic means' means simply 'the destruction of art in order to build a new art.'"[24]

From this perspective, Dada can be seen as the point of origin for the development of a new approach to typography that had its roots in the present and was reflective of the

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[22] Lissitsky, quoted in John Lewis, Typography: Design and Practice, New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1978, p. 72.

[23] Douglas McMurtrie, The Book: The Story of Printing and Bookmaking, New York: Oxford University Press, 1943, p. 504.

[24] Richter, 1965, p. 164.

social chaos and new technology. Or, as Richard Huelsenbeck stated in En Avant Dada, "Dada was to be the rallying point for abstract energies and a lasting slingshot for the great international artistic movements."[25]

The problem taken on by Dada and other avant-garde movements was the role and function of art and other forms of representation and expresssion. Dada can only be rejected or passed off as childish anarchy if evaluated according to a system of logic imposed from without. Peter Burger notes, "Interpretation that does not confine itself to grasping logical connections but examines the procedures by which the text was composed can discover a relatively consistent meaning in them."[26] This dialectic approach suggested by Burger requires an interpretation of Dada that goes beyond comparing and contrasting Dada with popular or traditional forms. Dada must be seen as more than rejection of traditional forms and conventions in typography and graphic design. The intent of Dada was to reveal the arbitrary relationship between signs and signifiers. Language mediates experience and typography mediates language. By exploiting the expressive potential of typography, Dada offered a potential rupture in the dominant sign-symbol system--a point from which to create new

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[25] Richard Huelsenbeck, "En Avant Dada: A History of Dadaism" in Theories of Modern Art, Herschel Chipp (ed.), Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971, p. 378.

[26] Peter Burger, Theories of the Avant-Garde, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, p. 79.

meanings and relationships.

Dada cannot be seen as entirely negative. In challenging traditional conventions, it sought to reunite artistic production with the totality of social activities, or "life praxis." The random and accidental character of its works can be seen as an attempt to synthesize the diverse elements of expression and form in a struggle to reflect the chaos of post World War I Europe. Dada is easily marginalized by some because of its negativity. But negation as the basis of a movement denies it any permanence. If it is difficult to see a productive influence in Dada itself, perhaps something possitive can be recognized in the shadow cast by its ruins. The more disciplined approach taken by the Constructivists made something new out of the fragments of Dada. As such, Dada's random character, which was seemingly unfocused from without but subjectively coherant from within, contributed--along with other avant-garde movements to a reconceptualization of relations among elements which guides the combination of forms to produce new meanings and to give new order to typographic design. The influence of Dada and other avant-garde movements has largely been marginalized in the mainstream literature, despite the fact that similar experimentation with the expressive characteristics of typography and graphic design are today taken for granted.

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Figure 1

"Already in Marinetti's Joffre poem, movement, space, time, visual and audible sensations were simultaneously expressed by the typography. One sees the curves which the motor car followed, the 'dynamic verbalizat'cn' of the route of Joffre in the lower rihgt hand corner. The general's conventional speech tc the soldiers is translated into typography. His words are torn to pieces by the accompanying noise of machine guns and cannons. A large number of soldiers is represented by logarithm columns in the upper left; they echo the general's shouting "Vive la France! Mort au Boches!" (Hohely-Harry, "Literature," in Kostelanetz, 1982, p. 96.)

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Figure 2

Pages from Cabaret Voltaire

D A D A

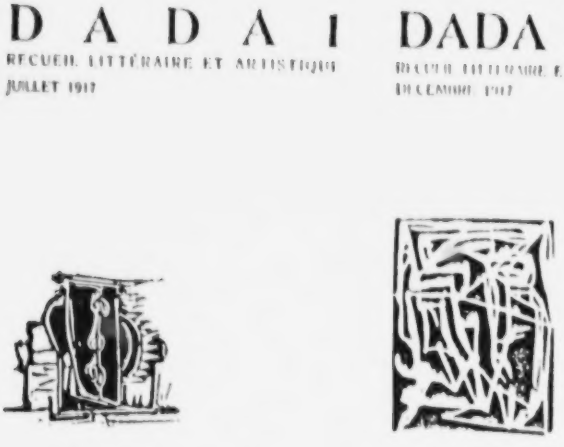
DIALOGUE ENTRE UN COCHER ET UNE ALOUETTE

Marcel Janco. Richard Huelsenbeck. Tristan Tzara. Holzschnitte. Woodcuts. Bois gravés. «Dada Dialogue». In: «Cabaret Voltaire». Zürich. 1916.

Simultan-Gedicht. Simultaneous poem. Poème simultan. «Cabaret Voltaire». Zürich. 1916.

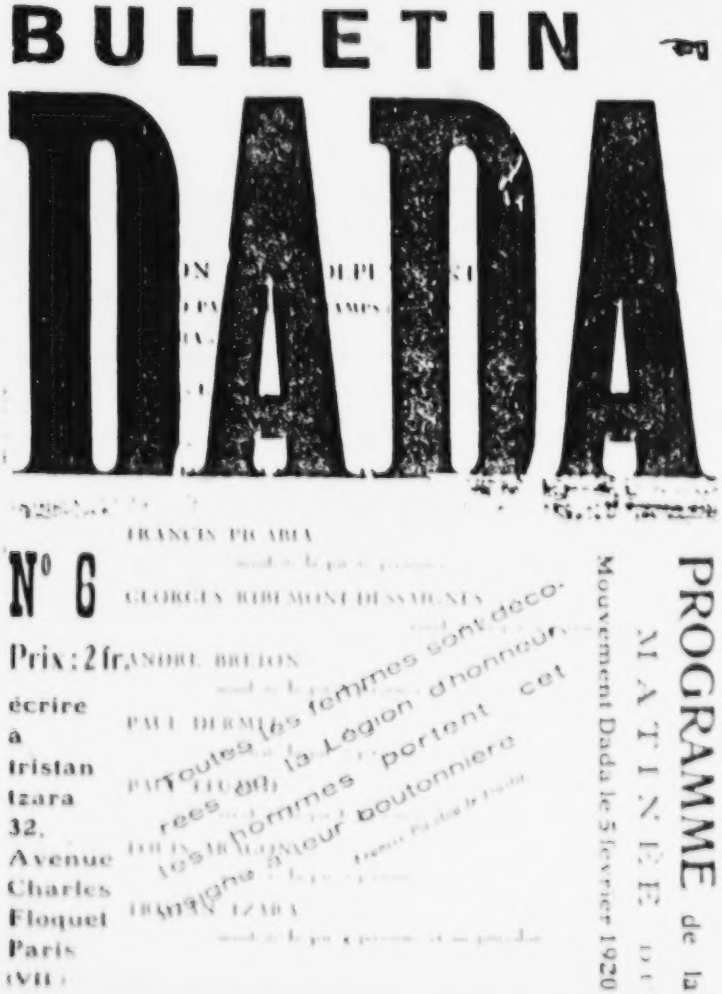
L'amiral cherche une maison à louer

Poème simultan par R. Huelsenbeck, M. Janko, Tr. Tzara



Covers for *Dada*, 1917/18

Francis Picabia, Title page for *Dada*, Zurich 1919



Cover. (For *Dada* no. 6, edited by Tristan Tzara). Paris, 1920.

Cover. (For *Dada* no. 7, edited by Tristan Tzara)

Drawing by Francis Picabia. Paris, March, 1920

COW-BOY

Sur le Far West
ou il y a une seule lune
Le Cok Boy chante
à rompre la nuit
Et son cigare est une étoile
filante
SON POULAIN FERRÉ D'AILES
N'A JAMAIS EU DE PANNE
Et lui
la tête contre les genoux
danse un Cake Walk
New York
à quelques kilomètres
Dans les gratte-ciels
Les ascenseurs montent comme des thermomètres
Et près du Niagara
qui a éteint ma pipe
Je regarde les étoiles éclaboussées
Le Cow Boy
sur une corde à violon
Traverse l'Ohio

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE

circuit total par la lune et par la couleur
à marcel janco

Tristan tzara

REGIE

Ferdinand HARDEKOPF

Etoile qui brûle
Regard humide
Lit de la vierge
Bulle en vent
Cette rompeuse me mourir
Impasse
dans la MÉCANIQUE DE MAYAK
Paul Dermée

BULLETIN

Etendard cravate

51 83 111 formule la réflexion

A la poste

le vent sous l'eau

Figure 5

John Heartfield, Berlin, 1917.
Pages from the large-format newspaper *Neue Jugend* published by Der Malik, a publishing house established by John Heartfield and his brother Helmut Herzfelde in 1917.

Figure 6

Die freie Strasse

Gegen den Besitz!

Die Freie Strasse (no. 9), ed. Franz Jung, Berlin, November, 1918.

Figure 7

Dada Manifesto from Dada Almanach

dadaistisches manifest

Die Kunst ist in ihrer Ausführung und Richtung von der Zeit abhängig, in der sie lebt, und die Künstler und Kreaturen ihrer Epoche. Die höchste Kunst wird diejenige sein, die in ihren Bewußtseinsinhalten die tausendfachen Probleme der Zeit potenziert, der man anmerkt, daß sie sich von den Explosionen der letzten Woche werfen ließ, die ihre Glieder immer wieder unter dem Stoß des letzten Tages zusammensucht. Die besten und unerbittlichsten Künstler werden diejenigen sein, die sämtlich die Fetzen ihres Leibes aus dem Wirrsal der Lebensstatistik zusammenreißen, verbissen in den Intellekt der Zeit, blutend an Händen und Herzen.

Hat der Expressionismus unsere Erwartungen auf eine solche Kunst erfüllt, die eine Ballonage unserer vitalsten Angelegenheiten ist?

Nein! Nein! Nein!

Haben die Expressionisten unsere Erwartungen auf eine Kunst erfüllt, die uns die Essenz des Lebens ins Fleisch brennt?

Nein! Nein! Nein!

Unter dem Vorwand der Vermenschlichung haben sich die Expressionisten in der Literatur und in der Malerei zu einer Generation zusammengeschlossen, die heute schon schmeichlerisch ihre literatur- und kunsthistorische Würdigung erwartet und für eine ehrenvolle Bürger-Anerkennung kandidiert. Unter dem Vorwand, die Seele zu propagieren, haben sie sich im Kampfe gegen den Kubismus nur zu einer primitiv-pathetischen Geste „zurückgefunden, die nun exhibitionist, hequemen und unbeweglichen Leben zur Voraussetzung haben. Die Nihilisten Lilien und Bonzen, Nihilisten und touristischen Naturen jeder Art, die Theorie einer metaphysischen Weltauffassung, deren kindliche, psychologisch-naive Manier für eine künstlerische Eingebung des Expressionismus angesehen bleiben muß, durchgesetzt die [illegible] Idyll. Der Haß gegen die Essenz, der Haß gegen die Reklame, der Haß gegen die Synthese spricht für Menschen, denen die Sensation wichtiger ist als die [illegible] und die sich einen künstlerischen machen, um [illegible] Widerstand gegen die Zeit, die nicht besser [illegible] und nicht [illegible] Leben und Weltanschauung [illegible]

Ihre Farbgeschosse zu machen — sie sind Eigenschaften einer Jugend, die es niemals verstanden hat, jung zu sein. Der Expressionismus, der im Ausland gefunden, in Deutschland nach beliebter Manier eine fette Idylle und Erwartung guter Personen geworden ist, hat mit dem Sterben Ulliger Menschen nichts mehr zu tun. Die Unterzeichner dieses Manifests haben sich unter dem Streitruf

DADA!!!!

zur Propaganda einer Kunst gesammelt, von der sie die Verwirklichung neuer Ideale erwarten. Was ist nun der DADAISMUS?

Das Wort Dada symbolisiert das primitivste Verhältnis zur umgebenden Wirklichkeit, mit dem Dadaismus tritt eine neue Realität in ihre Rechte. Das Leben erscheint als ein simultanes Gewirr von Geräuschen, Farben und grellsten Rhythmen, das in die dadaistische Kunst unbesehrt mit allen grausamen Schrecken und Fieberm seiner verworrenen Alltagsspeche und in seiner gesammten brutalen Realität übernommen wird. Hier ist der scharf markierte Schlußstrich, der den Dadaismus von allen bisherigen Kunstrichtungen und vor allem von dem FUTURISMUS trennt, den kläglich Schwächlinge als eine neue Auflage impressionistischer Pinselführung aufgefaßt haben. Der Dadaismus steht zum erstenmal dem Leben nicht mehr ästhetisch gegenüber, indem er alle Schlagworte vom Ethik, Kultur und Innerlichkeit, die nur Mäntel für schwache Muskeln sind, in seine Bestandteile zerlegt.

Das BRUITISTISCHE Gedicht

schildert eine Trambahn wie sie ist, die Essenz der Trambahn mit dem Gähnen des Bremsers Schaden und dem Schrei der Bremsen.

Das SIMULTANISTISCHE Gedicht

bringt drei Sätze des Durcheinanderjagens eines Dieners, während Ihre Schulden [illegible] Ihnen der Rabbenzug über die Brücke bei Nacht, ein Schwein jammert im Keller die Schlächterei Hoffe.

Das STATISCHE Gedicht

macht die Worte zu Individuen, aus den dem Farbstichen Wald, mit der Wolf mit seinen Raubtieraugen, Eisenbahnzügen und Wolkenwerk, vollzieht sich auch eine Fernsicht [illegible] vollzieht Schnaps oder Bella Lugosi. Das Dadaismus [illegible] Wirklichkeiten und Anschauungen [illegible] DADAISTISCHE Werk des Impressionisten [illegible] Angelegenheiten nicht mehr gelten will, [illegible] gelegt. Das Wort [illegible]

neuen Materials in der Malerei.

Dada ist ein **CLUB**, [illegible]

Tristan Tzara. Hans Arp. Georges Hugnet. Marcel Janco. Richard Huelsenbeck.
Gerhard Preiß. Raoul Hausmann.

O. Lüthy. Frederic Glauser. Hugo Ball. Emmy Hennings.
Marie d'Heure Ling Cabaret. Frankenstein. P. van Ross. Mathilde von Rees.
Hans Arp. O. Täuber. Andrée Marevna. Emmy Hennings Painlevé.

Club Dada

Wunder der Wunder!

Die dadaistische Welt

1 9 1 8

realisiert in einem Augenblick

DADA

internationaler Rhythmus

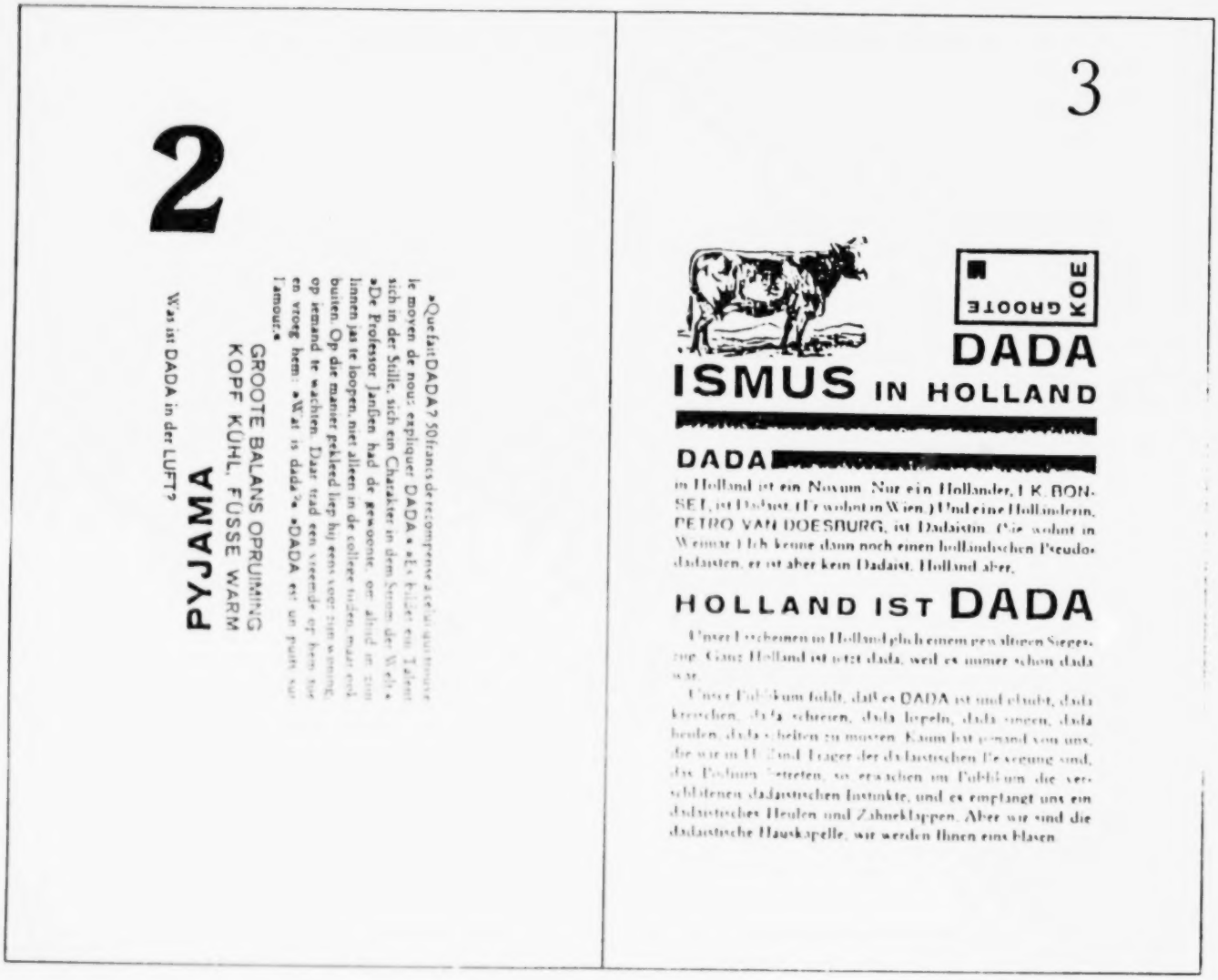
Figure 8

„Der Blutige Ernst", Berlin, 1919.

Figure 9

Umschlag. Cover. Couverture. »Der Dada«. No. 1. Berlin.

Figure 10



2

PYJAMA

Was ist DADA in der LUFT?

GROOTE BALANS OPRUIMING
KOPF KÜHL, FÜSSE WARM

•Que fait DADA? 50 francs de récompense à celui qui trouvera le moyen de nous expliquer DADA.• •Es findet ein Talent sich in der Stille, sich ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt.• •De Professor Janßen had de grootste, een alleen in de college tijden, maar ook buiten. Op die manier gekleed liep hij eens voor zijn woning op iemand te wachten. Daar trad een vreemde op hem toe en vroeg hem: •Wat is dada?• •DADA est un point sur l'amour.•

3

KOE GROOTE

DADA

ISMUS IN HOLLAND

DADA

in Holland ist ein Novum. Nur ein Holländer, I K BONSET, ist Dadaist. (Er wohnt in Wien.) Und eine Holländerin, PETRO VAN DOESBURG, ist Dadaistin. (Sie wohnt in Weimar.) Ich kenne dann noch einen holländischen Pseudodadaisten, er ist aber kein Dadaist, Holland aber.

HOLLAND IST DADA

Unser Erscheinen in Holland gleicht einem neu aufgetanen Siegeszug. Ganz Holland ist jetzt dada, weil es immer schon dada war.

Unser Publikum fühlt, daß es DADA ist und glaubt, dada kreuchen, dada schreien, dada liegeln, dada singen, dada heulen, dada scheißen zu müssen. Kaum hat jemand von uns, die wir in Holland Träger der dadaistischen Bewegung sind, das Podium betreten, so erwachen im Publikum die verschlafensten dadaistischen Instinkte, und es empfängt uns ein dadaistisches Heulen und Zähneklappen. Aber wir sind die dadaistische Hauskapelle, wir werden ihnen eins blasen.

Kurt Schwitters.
Above: Inside pages from the first issue of *Merz*, published in January 1923. The original is printed in black on yellow paper.

MERZ

1

DADA

HOLLAND

DADA

JANUAR 1923
HERAUSGEBER: KURT SCHWITTERS
HANNOVER - WALDHAUSERSTRASSE 5ª

Figure 11

Merz (no. 8/9 "Nasci"), eds. Kurt Schwitters and El Lissitzky, Hanover, April-July 1924. Collection: Special Collections Department, The University of Iowa Libraries.